



“These Are a Few of My Favorite”

# Tools for Online Learning

By Lisa Monthie

**C**onsidering online teaching and learning? Not sure where to start? Just like in your brick-and-mortar classroom, there are many aspects of learning that must be considered before implementation can occur. Whether you will be using a blended learning, flipped classroom, or distance-learning model, you'll need to determine your objectives, assets, and logistics before you begin. And because an ever-growing wealth of online content and collaborative tools exist, you will want to spend time researching to discover the best resources. In this article, I'll share my favorite tools for each online model.

The first question you should ask is “What are my learning goals and/or objectives?” This question will help determine which method or platform is best for delivering content.

Next, you must question logistics and available assets. For example, what types of technology do my students possess? Do my students have smartphones, iPads, laptops, etc.? Do my students have wireless network capabilities or Internet access at home and in school? Does my school support online learning as detailed in an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) or Responsible Use Policy (RUP)? Once these basic questions are answered, you are ready to begin planning for online learning.

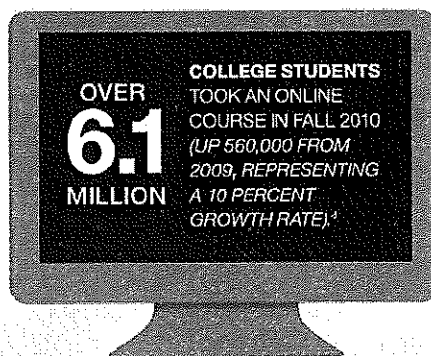
## Online Learning

Online learning (or any learning for that matter) should be action-oriented, promoting active learning and engagement with the content. The online instruction should result in mastery of content goals and objectives all with the appropriate rigor.

*This infographic has been reprinted from “The Blended & Virtual Learning Frontier Special Report” by the Center for Digital Education.*

In designing online learning experiences, you must include the scaffolding students need to master new content. Also be aware that you will want to have additional resources for remediation and extension so that you can provide

## The Growth of Blended and Virtual Learning



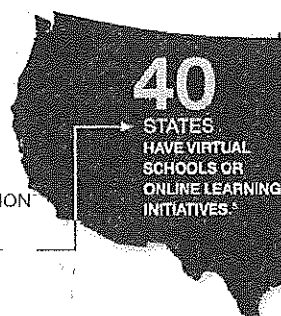
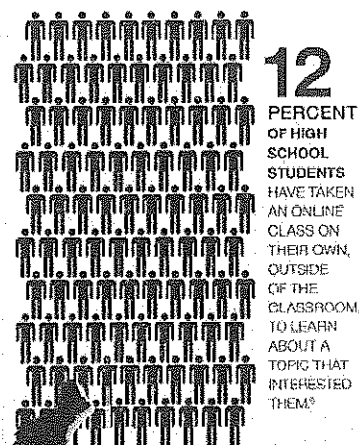
AT THE  
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differentiated learning experiences for your students.

In addition to curricular goals, social interactions must be planned for and expectations established for meaningful and appropriate socializing. This aspect of learning should not be overlooked; students should be encouraged to create an online support system for collaboration and growth. Opportunities for socializing should include interactions between teacher and student, student and student, and student and content.

## Blended Learning

Blended learning, also known as hybrid learning, is a combination of face-to-face and online instruction. The teacher connects personally with the students in the brick-and-mortar classroom and that relationship





extends online. In part because of this connection, a teacher can immediately intervene with remediation or acceleration as needed. Also, the student does not experience the isolation that can occur in a completely online course.

Blended learning can be the best of both worlds. The teacher can provide the best multimedia resources to complement the core content and extend or reinforce the learning. He or she can also easily differentiate for students based on their instructional needs and learning styles. With blended learning, the emphasis is on active learning, independent and collaborative assessments, and learning beyond the classroom walls.

### Tools for Blended Learning

Edmodo is one tool you could employ in a blended learning model. Edmodo provides a secure learning environment for any grade level/content area. The

teacher creates a class and provides an access code to the students. The students then use the access code to join the class.

One of the features of Edmodo is "Note." Using this feature, the teacher can post an announcement to the class, share files, and engage in dialogue with students.

"Assignments" is another feature and allows students to access files and links to complete a task. With "Assignments," you can view who completed the task. The teacher can create any format of quiz and send it to the class. Once a student has completed the quiz, the results show in a grade book (which can be exported as a CSV file). A polling feature allows the teacher to survey the class and notifications show up on the side of the screen, allowing the teacher to receive updates at a glance.

Another recommendation for a blended learning model is Kidblog. Kidblog is a blogging platform and much, much more. The platform contains the ability to embed almost any multimedia into a post, allowing endless possibilities for assessment. Students could watch an embedded YouTube video and post a response to a prompt. The teacher and/or the student could create a product using Web 2.0 tools and embed it in posts. Both teachers and students could use Kidblog as a place to house ePortfolios, showcasing their work. Most importantly, teachers can post multimedia to extend learning and introduce or review concepts.

### The Flipped Classroom

One popular approach to online learning is the flipped classroom. In a flipped classroom, students review content at home and then apply that learning in the classroom. This model establishes a foundation of knowledge (outside of class) and then uses instructional time in the classroom to expand upon that foundation. A flipped classroom shares many of the benefits of blended learning. The teacher can monitor and intervene with students as needed, using class time to work and connect with students individually. Among other benefits, the flipped model maximizes the limited amount

of instructional time teachers have with students.

### Tools for Flipped Classrooms

TEDEd is ideal for a flipped classroom model. TEDEd contains original lessons, created by instructors and animated by professionals. Lessons can be viewed conceptually (by subject) or thematically (by series). Each lesson employs the following scaffolding: Watch, Think, and Dig Deeper. "Watch" contains a quick multiple choice quiz students can use for assessment. "Think" is a short answer question students can use for deeper comprehension. "Dig Deeper" provides additional resources for exploration. Each lesson can be modified by clicking on the "Flip this Lesson" button. The teacher can edit the information, add questions, and add resources. When a lesson is flipped, a unique URL is created for that lesson. If students are signed in to their YouTube account, they can track their progress through the lesson. As the teacher, you can view student progress through the lesson. In addition, you can use any video from YouTube and create your own flipped lesson.

NeoK12 contains educational videos, games, puzzles, and quizzes. Videos are available for almost any content area, and, with one click, users can search YouTube for more videos. Users can also recommend that those search results be included on the listing at NeoK12. Listed with the videos are interactive quizzes and print-friendly materials. Once an account is created, the user has a dashboard available, showing videos recently viewed, quizzes taken, and interactives explored. Additional features include "What's Up Today," a daily assortment of historical events, word of the day, science news for kids, and contests such as a spelling bee, hangman, and funny comics about education.

### Distance Learning

A final model for online learning is known as distance learning, sometimes called a "virtual school" and known for being completely online. This format is flexible in meeting the needs of students and can be synchronous or asynchronous.

IF  
CURRENT  
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**2018**

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# Resources for the Online Instructor

**Edmodo**

[www.edmodo.com](http://www.edmodo.com)

**Google Hangouts**

<https://tools.google.com/dlpage/hangoutplugin>

**Kidblog**

[www.kidblog.com](http://www.kidblog.com)

**NeoK12**

[www.neok12.com](http://www.neok12.com)

**Project Share**

[www.projectsharetx.org](http://www.projectsharetx.org)

## Tools for Distance Learning

A personal favorite tool of mine is Project Share, the online learning environment adopted by TEA. Within Project Share are copious (yes, copious) numbers of courses that are available at no charge to educators and students within the state. In addition to the multitude of courses available, teachers can create their own courses within the system.

Each course has popular Web 2.0 tools available, such as blogs, wikis, forums, chat, and drop boxes. Multimedia and additional content is available within the content repositories. Teachers can create tests and quizzes and have the results auto-populate the grade book. Other features such as adaptive release, instructor reports, and a calendar allow teachers to closely monitor student progress toward curricular goals.

Google has also transformed distance learning through the use of hangouts, which allow students to video chat with instructors or peers. Hangouts can occur with multiple circles of students, and they can be streamed live so that anyone can participate. They are also saved to YouTube accounts, enabling students to watch the hangout at a later time. During a hangout, participants can share files and collaborate on projects via Google Drive. Google also has a course creation tool available called "course-builder." "Course-builder" looks promising; it brings the best tools from Google into the online learning experience.

So what are your next steps? Choose a tool and explore. Ask people on Twitter

or Facebook for their thoughts. Be confident and just do it. Online learning is re-conceptualizing education as we know it. Online courses themselves teach so much more than content. Online courses teach the social skills needed to thrive in an online learning community. In using online learning, you are planting the seeds for students' active participation in future PLNs (such as Twitter and the TCEA Social Community) and developing the effective digital citizens of tomorrow.



*Lisa Monthie is an education specialist at ESC Region 12 in Waco, Texas. Lisa has 10 years of experience in education and*

*holds a Master's in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Educational Technology. She enjoys finding innovative means of integrating technology in the ELA/R classroom.*

## **t a TEKS** Professional Development Technology Applications

**THE NEW TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS TEKS** are now effective for the 2012-2013 school year. To support teachers and administrators in implementing these new standards, a set of online professional development courses are available through Project Share. These courses are free to any public school professional in the state of Texas.

**A Quest for Technology Integration:** These three courses are designed for K-8 teachers emphasizing best practices in technology integration and twenty-first century learning. (All courses offered in a facilitated version, and a self-paced version.)

■ Grades K-2

■ Grades 3-5

■ Grades 6-8

**Administrator's Overview Course:** This course is a one-hour course designed to give administrators an overview of technology integration, and twenty-first century learning. (self-paced)

**Journey to 21st Century Transformation (pending TEA approval):** The new TA High School courses have been clustered into four professional development courses. These courses focus on the new standards, twenty-first century learning, and resources for implementation. (all self-paced)

■ Digital Media

■ Computer Science

■ Emerging Technologies

■ Web Development



For more information:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/TATEKSPD>

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